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ABSTRACT

The world's political structure and many economic practices are out of harmony with nature. This disharmony threatens environmentally sustainable growth and human survival. United Nations (UN) conference participants discussed the degree of political acceptance of concepts such as environmental security and sustainable development. Their reading of the political situation was then used to analyze possible international responses to environmental degradation and natural resource depletion. Some themes which arose in discussing the international response were: (1) The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) has done a generally good job in carrying out its limited mission with limited resources. (2) There is a need for policy coordination among nations, across international institutions, and bridging sectors such as economics, population, and environment. An intergovernmental body that meets at a high level is needed to cut through bureaucratic rivalries and to put political muscle behind initiatives. (3) A major institutional deficiency of the international system involves the failure to adequately measure and internalize all sorts of production in many economic enterprises. (4) The forthcoming 1992 UN conference on the environment should be a UN meeting, not a UNEP meeting, and there should be high-level participation from nations. If the momentum for change in international environmental efforts can be sustained, there is hope for near-term agreement on measures to curb planet-threatening abuses of the environment. A list of conference participants and the conference opening speech are included. (Author/JB)

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Environmental Problems: A Global Security Threat

1989

The Stanley Foundation

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Environmental Problems: A Global Security Threat

Report of the Twenty-fourth United Nations of the Next Decade Conference

Sponsored by
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June 18-23, 1989
Convened at
Hamilton Parish, Bermuda

Executive Summary

The world's political structure and many economic practices are out of harmony with nature. This disharmony threatens environmentally sustainable growth and, ultimately, human survival.

Concern over the environment and a growing recognition of the international character of many environmental threats have caught the public's interest in nearly every part of the world. Conference participants discussed the degree of political acceptance of concepts like environmental security and sustainable development. Their reading of the political situation was then used to analyze possible international responses to environmental degradation and natural resource depletion.

Political Pulse
Participants agreed that environmental problems currently pose or could pose severe threats to the general well-being and long-term survival of human life. But characterizing environmental threats as security issues was a more controversial proposition.

Advocates of using the concept noted the real threats to security ranging from direct hazards to health posed by environmental

degradation to issues related to the environment like population and poverty. The environmental security concept helps make the case for rethinking what security is—i.e., that it should not have a strictly military connotation. Also, using the term helps to get the attention of national leaders, a prerequisite for meaningful action on international environmental concerns.

Other participants worried that *security* is an overused term and that many undesirable actions have been taken in its name. They feared that use of the concept could promote inappropriate responses to the problem. In addition, while the term might get political leaders' attention, it does not suggest a program of action. Finally, the concept pushes thinking away from the fundamental economic and institutional failures which underlie the environmental crisis.

Participants also examined the concept of "sustainable development" which was articulated and elaborated on by the World Commission on Environment and Development. The commission's report calls for a new era of economic growth, noting that environmentally sound revitalization of the Third World economy is one of the requirements for restoring the planet's ecological health.

Many called for further definition of the concept, noting that the commission's explanation contains little in the way of concrete proposals. However, many also noted that sustainable development was conceived as a process, not a program, and that its vagueness will fade given sufficient study and development. The concept should be used in guiding the development of a workable strategy.

Any discussion of development recalls the North-South debate which has been deadlocked for more than a decade. While many leaders in the South acknowledge the threat posed by a deteriorating environment, they fear that the North's concern over this issue will simply place more conditions on assistance they need for economic revitalization. They also note that the worst polluters are in the North. These viewpoints were stated by several participants, but others said it is a mistake to generalize about the differences between North and South. These traditional divisions should not be allowed to undercut the message that sustainable development is a comprehensive approach that is the only way of dealing with the environmental and development crises. Most participants agreed that the major test of sustainable development is whether or not new funding for development accompanies increased environmental efforts.

International Response

Some participants argued that environmental problems are so pervasive that they should be used to radically reorder the way the world does business economically, politically, and socially. However, others noted that there are many serious problems, and only those environmental problems which threaten the survivability of the planet should get top-priority attention. Another group expressed confidence that environmental and development problems will push political leaders in the direction of adopting a common goal—restoring the health of the planet's ecosystems, including dealing with questions of equity.

Some themes which arose in discussing the international response:

—The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has done a generally good job in carrying out its limited mission with limited resources. Most participants favored strengthening the program but said that an adequate international response to environmental problems requires looking well beyond UNEP.

—There is a need for policy coordination between nations, across international institutions, and bridging sectors such as economics, population, environment, etc. An intergovernmental body which meets at a high level is needed to cut through bureaucratic rivalries and to put political muscle behind initiatives. The interconnectedness of many issues makes the need for such a group obvious to some participants, but others questioned whether the world is ready for it.

—A major institutional deficiency of the international system involves the failure to adequately measure and internalize all costs of production in many economic enterprises, for example, assigning value to a tropical rainforest. This creates distortions throughout the marketplace and needs to be remedied if real progress is to be made on the environment.

—Conference participants offered many thoughts on how to make the forthcoming 1992 UN conference on the environment an important vehicle in promoting international environmental cooperation. These are detailed in the report. A major theme was that the conference should be a UN meeting and not a UNEP meeting and that there should be high-level participation from nations. It should be prepared by an independent secretariat led by a politically eminent person.

New winds are stirring political momentum for change in international environmental efforts. If that momentum can be sustained, as it must, there is good reason to hope for near-term agreement on measures to curb planet-threatening abuses of the environment.

Participants

Conference Chairman
Richard H. Stanley, President, The Stanley Foundation

Rapporteurs
David J. Doerge, Vice President, The Stanley Foundation
Jeffrey G. Martin, Vice President, The Stanley Foundation

Participants
Aleksandr M. Belonogov, Permanent Representative of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to the United Nations

Richard Elliot Benedick, Senior Fellow, The Conservation Foundation and World Wildlife Fund

Frederick M. Bernthal, Assistant Secretary for Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, US Department of State

Maurice Bertrand, Special Fellow, United Nations Institute for Training and Research

Noel J. Brown, Special Representative of the Executive Director and Regional Director, United Nations Environment Programme, North America

Gamani Corea, Former Secretary-General, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

Michael M. Gucovsky, Deputy Assistant Administrator and Director, Technical Advisory Division, Bureau for Programme Policy and Evaluation, United Nations Development Programme

Peter Hansen, Assistant Secretary-General and Executive Director, United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations

Abraham Katz, President, United States Council for International Business

Sverre Lodgaard, Director, International Peace Research Institute, Oslo

Jessica T. Mathews, Vice President, World Resources Institute

Hugo Navajas-Mogro, Permanent Representative of Bolivia to the United Nations

Olara A. Otunnu, French Institute of International Relations

Kenneth W. Piddington, Director, Environment Department, The World Bank

Jeremy Rifkin, President, National Foundation on Economic Trends

John Gerard Ruggie, Director, Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation, University of California

Mohamed Sahnoun, Ambassador of Algeria to Morocco

Nico J. Schrijver, Senior Lecturer in International Law and International Institutions, Institute of Social Studies

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Affiliations are listed for identification purposes only. Participants attended as individuals rather than as representatives of their governments or organizations.

Opening Remarks

Richard H. Stanley
President, the Stanley Foundation

We meet to exchange views and develop thoughts and recommendations on "Environmental Problems: A Global Security Threat." Conferences on the environment seem to be in vogue these days. However, this week's dialogue is not intended to be just another in a long line of conferences. We have the participants, the agenda, the need, and the opportunity to focus on the role of international political institutions in responding to environmental concerns. We hope that this conference will be an especially helpfull and productive one.

Growing Public Concern

Public concern over the environment is mounting. Much attention has been focussed in the last few months on the oil spill off Alaska's coast in Prince William Sound. Last summer's drought in the midwestern United States prompted speculation about whether it signaled the beginning of the consequences of global warming. And there has been considerable public discussion about the "hole" in the ozone layer over Antarctica and about destruction of the tropical rainforests.

This growing public concern about the environment is documented by Harris polls that have been commissioned by the United Nations Environment Program. In each country, majorities of 75 to 100 percent agreed that more should be done by governments and international organizations to address environmental problems. And, as pollster Louis Harris noted, "... alarm about the deterioration of the environment and support for much tougher environmental programs are not confined to Western countries, but are found in the East and West, in the South and North, and in the rich and poor countries of the world."

While people are aware of environmental hazards, they often do not know how to respond. For example, three out of four farmers who were surveyed by my *alma mater,* Iowa State University, believed that they use too many chemicals in their operations. At the same time, most of them doubted that low input farming—use of fewer chemicals and less tillage—can produce yields that are sufficient to meet national and international demand.

Slowly the public is awakening to the hazards that have concerned scientists for years. Books have been written about the numerous global environmental threats, but certainly a short list of the problems would include: ozone depletion, global warming, loss of genetic diversity, desertification, air and water pollution, solid waste disposal, and the increasing presence of hazardous and toxic materials in food chains. Rapid population growth and chronic poverty both contribute to and exacerbate these threats. Overpopulation brings social and developmental problems which have environmental linkages. Chronic poverty defies any sense of economic justice and erodes population stabilization and environmental protection efforts.

The list is depressing. It brings us face to face with the reality that we have the capacity to terminate human existence on this fragile planet, whether by accident or design. This is a new capacity, one which has developed only within my lifetime. It is a capacity that has two aspects: nuclear holocaust and ecological destruction. Nuclear holocaust is finally being recognized as a threat to survival, and some modest but encouraging progress has been made recently. The environmental danger is relatively new to our thinking, and we are still grappling with its complexities and consequences. We don't know how to deal with it. Yet, unless we do, the earth's environmental systems will become so fouled that human civilization will end.

Hope, Not Despair

It would be easy to despair. But we dare not, and we need not. We dare not because we would be abdicating our generation's responsibility for continuation of human existence and progress. We need not because there is basis for hope. Despoliation of the planet is not inevitable. Industrial and economic progress need not bring about abuse of ecosystems. Exhaustion of natural resources and destruction of the environment are not foregone conclusions.

The report of the World Commission on Environment and Development—the Brundtland Commission report—emphasized the concept of "sustainable development." It made the case that environmental degradation does not require a suspension of economic growth. Rather, a new era of growth is **needed** because poverty is both a cause and a result of environmental problems.

In many respects the Brundtland Commission report is optimistic. It maps out a course of economic growth that is environmentally sustainable. Like Charles Dickens' character, Ebenezer Scrooge, we have been shown our future, but we have also been shown that we need not meet that future if we change our course. But can we adjust our perceptions and mind-set? Will we change our course? Will we have the self-control and political will to do so? Will our human and political institutions be equal to the challenge?

Obstacles to Sustainable Development

The major obstacles to achieving environmentally sustainable growth are human and political, not technical or economic.

While continuing technological progress will be a part of the solution, it is foolish to think in terms of a technical "quick fix" to resolve our problems. And, while wiser use of **economic** resources is necessary, this will happen only to the extent that our political and human institutions encourage and enforce the integration of environmental factors into economic and resource decision making.

What is really needed is for us to change the paradigm of our thinking, of our lifestyle, and of our institutions to one which fits and fosters environmentally sustainable growth. Until quite recently, we have operated out of the assumption that there would always be new frontiers to conquer. If one piece of land became "farmed out," we could always move to another. If one area became polluted, we could move on to new unspoiled ones. If one source of a raw material became depleted, there would always be others to be developed. The errors of this kind of thinking become quite obvious as we approach the limits of ecological systems. I remember well the first time I saw a photograph of planet earth taken from outer space. In my office at home I have two pictures taken from the Apollo 8 spacecraft in December 1968. This new view of the world as a fragile spaceship with finite limits on all its systems is the perception that must pervade our thinking if we are to deal constructively with environmental and resource problems.

We must learn to think and act in the context of the "spaceship earth" metaphor. We must understand that the world's ecological systems are closed cycles. There is really no "away" when we throw things.

We must understand that resources are finite and limited. Resources must be used and reused wisely because there are not new territories to explore with endless new supplies.

We must find ways to manage population growth within sustainable limits. A finite earth cannot indefinitely sustain geometrically increasing numbers of people.

We must be prepared to make near-term changes and pay near-term costs in order to ensure long-term survival. The consequences of environmental abuse are most often cumulative and long-term. For example, unless we move quickly to curb chlorofluorocarbon emissions, damage to the ozone layer (which will continue for many years in any event) may move beyond limits which can be tolerated.

We must resolve scientific doubt in the direction of safety. We may never fully understand the limits and resilience of ecological systems or the precise impact of actions upon them. Scientific uncertainty will always be present to one degree or another. Nevertheless, we must act on the basis of best available information while continuing research to improve our knowledge. If we delay action while waiting for certainty, we court disaster.

The costs and actions of environmental protection and sustainable growth are specific and focussed while the benefits and returns are general and diffuse. We must develop creative ways of linking costs with benefits so that decision-making incentives favor survival, not destruction.

We must learn to live with a global perspective, for truly, to quote Barry Commoner, "Everything is related to everything else." We will achieve environmentally sustainable growth together or not at all. Humanity is a part of the complex ecosystems of the earth, not independent of them. Thus, environmentally sustainable growth is not a spectator sport. It requires personal involvement and a willingness to adjust lifestyle. It must be the concern of all peoples and nations, not just some of them.

The Security Question

I am convinced that we will be able to achieve environmentally

sustainable growth only if the world community is prepared to elevate the importance of these issues on national and international agendas. It is encouraging that we increasingly hear some people discuss environmental issues as threats to security. In international relations, security issues are generally regarded as the stuff of "high politics" while economic, social, and environmental issues are considered "low politics." National leaders, of course, give priority attention to high politics.

Are national and international leaders really ready to think of environmental issues as genuine threats to security? The answer to that question will go a long way toward determining the international responses and the actions of intergovernmental bodies.

If national and international leaders are to consider environmental problems as security threats, they will have to move beyond traditional thinking. Traditionally, security is defined in national rather than global terms. National security is seen as a military issue, and there are several defining characteristics. First, there is the identification of an enemy or potential enemy. Second, there is the presence of a conflict of interests or goals. Third, there is a sense of urgency or immediacy to the threat. Together, these characteristics enable national leaders to ask their people to make sacrifices—to go to war, or to raise taxes, or to forego domestic programs so as to keep a strong military.

By contrast, we tend to think of international environment and resource depletion threats more abstractly. This is especially true of so-called "global" threats like global warming, ozone depletion, or loss of species. In these cases, there is no readily identifiable enemy; all too often the enemy is us. Second, we are in conflict with nature, not another nation or group. Third, the threat often has some degree of uncertainty, or seems distant—another continent, or years, perhaps decades away. In this set of circumstances national leaders, who often have difficulty acting on a time horizon that extends beyond the next election, find it difficult to make appeals to their people to make near-term adjustments or to change their lifestyle.

In sum, I suspect that for many national political leaders, a "global" problem is something for which someone else should take responsibility. It becomes cause for high-priority attention only when their nation or constituency is seen to be endangered.

Increasingly, that is likely to happen. It seems to me that public concern and awareness may be leading that of national and international leaders. History records dozens of wars that were fought over natural resources. As the availability of resources shrinks due to burgeoning population and environmental abuse, the prospects for future conflicts mount. There is growing recognition of the need to safeguard and preserve the global commons (the oceans, Antarctica, and outer space) and this cannot be done by individual nations. It requires an international response. Mounting population pressures and related issues of refugees and migration are growing national threats. Transboundary pollution carries with it the potential for conflicts between neighbors, and these quickly translate into national security issues. These are some ways in which national leaders might see environmental problems as a threat to their national security. But they probably will not, by themselves, be an adequate foundation on which to build an effective international response.

What is really needed is for national leaders to see the environmental threat for what it is, a clear and present danger to the continuation of human civilization—a danger that demands action and mobilization of national will and resources.

The International Response

Our purpose here this week is not to wring our hands and bemoan this danger. It is not to attempt to define or explain the threat. Rather, our challenge is to focus on what kind of international response and actions are necessary and appropriate.

We start with the recognition that most major environmental problems are international in character. That is, national governments acting alone cannot manage them. Yet, the world is organized into nation-states, and the actions of governments and intergovernmental bodies are crucial determinants of the international response. In addition, harmonized national actions will be an essential part of that response. Thus, the role of the United Nations and its family of organizations is extremely important.

The Brundtland Commission report and other works outline the kind of policies and practices that will move the world toward environmentally sustainable growth. These include education, institutional adjustment, regulation, investment, and incentives. It is possible to see what needs to be done in the long term, but real political obstacles stand in the way of implementing those actions.

What are these political obstacles? We need an honest and frank assessment of political realities. But more than that, we must give them their due; we must realize that they will not go away simply because we want them to and we cannot obviate them simply by creating a new UN committee or council. How can awareness of the realities of the environmental threat be increased and used to build political will for action? What are the appropriate international responses to environmental concerns? What is the most effective role for international institutions? How can their work be made most useful?

The threats are present and the danger is clear. We are charged with developing creative insights and constructive recommendations that will help to forge an effective international response to lift the world beyond inaction and beyond despair. Our generation must act to safeguard survival and sustainable development for succeeding generations.

Rapporteurs Jeff Martin and David Doerge

Environmental Problems: A Global Security Threat

The world's political structure and many economic practices and measures are in disharmony with nature, and this disharmony is reflected in the world's institutions. Formal institutions like those in the UN system have their roots in the nation-state system; they are challenged by environmental problems which show no respect for borders and cannot be met by nations acting independently. Economic decision-making practices and methods of measuring economic growth and activity too often are based on an ethic of use-and-dispose, which externalizes resource and environmental costs. This disharmony is a major obstacle to environmentally sustainable growth and, ultimately, to human survival.

This conference was convened to discuss the degree of political acceptance of such recently popular concepts as environmental security and sustainable development. Working from that assessment of political will, the conference explored the possibilities for actions that might bring practices, policies, and institutions more nearly into concert with nature.

The rapporteurs prepared this report following the conference. It contains their interpretation of the proceedings and is not merely a descriptive, chronological account. Participants neither reviewed nor approved the report. Therefore, it should not be assumed that every participant subscribes to all recommendations, observations, and conclusions.

Rise in Environmental Concern

Major environmental problems have existed for some time, but recently public awareness has risen meteorically. Participants offered many reasons for this sudden rise in public, national, and international concern about environmental issues.

The recent series of environmental catastrophes such as Bhophal, Chernobyl, the Exxon Valdez, and several very visible ongoing disasters like desertification and destruction of tropical rainforests have heightened awareness. Local environmental problems involving air, water, and hazardous solid waste pollution, coupled with general environmental degradation have confronted people in both developed and developing countries. Increased attention is being given to longer-term environmental trends, most notably depletion of the ozone layer and global warming or "greenhouse effect." These long-term issues are also becoming more personalized as the concern for skin cancer rises, weather patterns are altered, and loss of soil productivity increases.

Massive media coverage of environmental issues is both a cause and an effect of heightened public awareness. Some participants cautioned that increased media attention could tend to "hype" environmental issues and make them trendy, resulting in cosmetic actions such as ill-prepared summit meetings rather than the substantive long-term action needed. Others also cautioned that media coverage originating in developed countries could be detrimental in developing countries where the environment might be looked upon as the latest "rich" issue.

Participants cited the increased role of political activists and intellectuals in environmental or "green" movements as a critical element contributing to awareness and understanding of environmental issues and problems. On a global scale, political championing of the issue by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has increased awareness. Some participants cautioned that while UNEP had made progress, the main debate in the United Nations has been mired in petty bickering rather than focussed on devising global strategies. Finally, it was suggested that reduction in East-West tensions may signal the end of the post-World War II bi-polar international system. In terms of security, military factors may be on the decline, leaving room for nonmilitary factors like economic and environmental issues to receive greater attention and action. However, participants cautioned if environmental matters are to be permanently established as legitimate issues on the

international agenda of high politics, there is a need for not only favorable political conditions but also the institutionalization of environmental concerns.

Environment and Security

Recent deliberations on the environment have often conceptualized environmental problems as security issues. Participants generally agreed that environmental problems currently pose, or have the potential to pose, severe threats to the general well-being and long-term survival of human life on the planet. But characterizing environmental threats as security issues was more controversial.

In addition to direct threats posed by environmental degradation, several participants pointed out that disputes over depleted resources, growing numbers of environmental refugees, and disagreements over cross-boundary pollution could lead to conflict between countries. As environmental conditions deteriorate such problems will grow worse. Some participants made the case that considering environmental issues as security matters in the short run will help assure that national governments perceive these problems with the same high priority as is generally given to traditional military security issues. Additionally, several noted that while environmental problems are frequently very technical and their effects are often long-term, there are "no return" environmental thresholds in the near term. If the thresholds are crossed, the damage and subsequent effects will be irreversible. Consequently, they need prompt, high-priority attention, and a real security threat is involved.

Other participants rejected the security concept for environmental issues. Some noted that *security* is an overused term in the Western political lexicon carrying a great deal of unwanted baggage. This overuse has lessened its impact and could cause the environmental issue to be mired in a group of other problems. Others suggested that undesirable actions have been taken in the name of security and that posing environmental problems as a security issue could promote inappropriate traditional security-oriented responses to the problems. The concept of "energy security" was cited as an example of how loose conceptualization and poor thinking can squander billions of dollars. Another concern was that while using the security concept might mobilize the public and draw attention of national leaders to the issue, the security concept fails to suggest a program of action.

Some participants also questioned the appropriateness of featuring security as the concept when much of the problem is caused by broad, fundamental economic and institutional failures. One participant described this phenomenon as "the tyranny of small decisions in which many little very rational decisions add up to huge problems we would never choose." Moreover, many environmental solutions being proposed have an economic inclination such as different pricing schemes, modified incentives, and others. Thus, economics may be a more accurate conceptualization than security.

Participants supporting the security concept responded that to talk about environmental security as something separable is mistaken. While environmental problems are not a traditional threat to security, they are directly related to the welfare and survival of citizens. Expanding and linking this security need to include economics makes the security concept valid as part of a larger, broader definition of what security really means. While there is disagreement over the merits, the Soviet proposal for a comprehensive global security plan was cited as one example of a program to address the need for this broader definition of security. *(Note: This discussion found a broad mix of participants on both sides of the question and was in no way an East-West disagreement.)*

For several participants, this discussion suggested some inherent limits on the security concept. As one participant noted: "Let's not develop a security concept and think it has global meaning." Security has been, and remains, a national rather than a global concept. In some ways, environmental security attempts to define issues like global warming and ozone depletion as global threats—the new enemy. Implementing a comprehensive security concept will be difficult while nationalism is still very much alive and the global system is not integrated. Other steps may be necessary before a new ideology of globalism is possible. In terms of security, arms control could be the first important step toward a new definition. Determining levels of military sufficiency could lead to serious discussions about globalism and global security. In sum, many participants questioned whether the world is ready to displace national ideology with a global ideology.

Sustainable Development: Politics and Perceptions

Perhaps some of the best work on an appropriate international response to the environmental crisis has been done by the World Commission on Environment and Development. The United Nations established this commission to conceive a comprehensive

"global agenda for change." Chaired by Gro Harlem Brundtland, now the Prime Minister of Norway, it is often referred to as the Brundtland Commission. A cornerstone of the commission's report, *Our Common Future*, recommends the pursuit of "sustainable development" as a comprehensive response to an interlocking set of global crises, i.e., environment, development, population, energy. Sustainable development is "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." The commission put forth this concept as a "process of change in which the exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological development, and institutional change are made consistent with future as well as present needs." Participants did not discuss directly the particulars of the commission's report although there was clearly a general acknowledgment of its utmost importance to the consideration of global environmental and related issues.

Most participants were quite supportive of sustainable development as a useful concept in dealing with environmental concerns. Much of the discussion on sustainable development focussed on the perceptions and politics this concept has evoked in various constituencies. Sustainable development is far and away the leading and most comprehensive response to these issues and is likely to remain so for the foreseeable future. As a major global concept or strategy, it must contend with the inevitable problems of definition and content development, North-South differences, and the reliance on political will for implementation. Participants at this conference gave considerable attention to these and related matters.

Definition and Content

Several participants noted that while the Brundtland Commission provided a general definition of sustainable development, its explanation contains little in the way of concrete proposals and does not spell out what this concept really means in operative terms. Some complained that the concept was not well thought through—for example, it failed to address direct implications to the poor. Others observed that a concept as broad as sustainable development is by its very nature about "the whole works." That being the case, it is inappropriate to single out the environment as the priority issue. Development should have equal emphasis and perhaps others like population should too.

Not all participants who criticized sustainable development for its

ambiguity and lack of substance were opposed to the concept itself. In fact, several identified and explored these deficiencies as a means of further strengthening the concept.

While agreeing about the need for more content in the concept of sustainable development and the need for more concrete proposals and assessments, many participants emphasized that sustainable development was conceptualized as a process, not a fixed program. They challenged those who criticized these deficiencies to give the concept the study and development it needs. They defended the concept of sustainable development as a sincere attempt to define a workable strategy. They pointed out that people are indeed considering the bargains they must make to achieve growth inside the constraints of safe environmental practices. They also noted that the content of the Brundtland Commission findings make it abundantly clear that the earth's resource base cannot continue to support geometrically increasing populations and unsound environmental activities.

North-South Debate

The seemingly undeniable conclusions of the Brundtland Commission report have been documented and confirmed elsewhere. Despite widespread acceptance of these conclusions, words will never convince like deeds. The politics of historic North-South differences must be overcome for sustainable development to become a reality. Many participants warned of the danger of letting discussions over sustainable development degenerate into the typically destructive, and all too common, North-South arguments of the past. It was widely acknowledged that there is, unfortunately, a strong political momentum at work pushing sustainable development into the abyss of North-South mistrust; and work is needed to prevent this politicization of the concept.

Environmental concerns as portrayed in the Northern media do not reflect a worldwide concern over the environment. Too often, Northern media emphasize environmental problems in the South, ignoring egregious pollution in the North. It is politically easier to ask someone else to change lifestyle than to change one's own. Some participants noted that living in harmony with nature is not a novel concept in many poor countries in Africa. They pointed out that past Northern economic compromises with the environment have been responsible for much of the environmental misery that now afflicts many poor nations. They noted that for many corporations, environmental degradation is a business decision, but for the

poor in developing countries it is an unhappy choice driven by the need for individual survival.

This is not to say that the South does not understand and respect the reality of environmental degradation and its impact on agricultural sectors and development. However, many developing countries are faced with debt, health care, education, and grinding poverty whose immediate urgency pushes environmental concerns lower on the list of priorities. Consequently, when sustainable development is put forward, it is easily viewed as another set of conditions on economic assistance which may hinder the future of development in the South to appease the concerns of the North. Some participants noted that the final irony is that pollution problems were largely created by developed countries and their industrial and agricultural production practices. As one participant said: "There is an old Chinese saying, let he who put the bell on the tiger take it off." Many who joined in this critique reflected the view that a commitment from the North to environmental solidarity—i.e., that your lives are as important as ours—must be delivered convincingly to the South.

Other participants observed that they could understand the initial skepticism toward sustainable development and respect the healthy cynicism of some toward the concept. Yet while the North has been responsible for much of the problem, some aspects like population (which has become a major factor in environmental concerns) have their origins in the South. With respect to the criticism that sustainable development has a Northern bias, several noted that the developing world was well represented on the Brundtland Commission and that many of the issues and complaints raised in the critique were addressed in the commission's report. Others suggested that it is a mistake to continue to generalize about the differences between the North and South. They observed that Prime Minister Brundtland has been enthusiastically received before the Organization of African Unity and that evidence exists of growing concern and cooperation between the North and South toward meeting the goals of sustainable development, including some initial programs that have been launched in the Third World. Additionally, they cautioned that sustainable development is not just another option; its comprehensive approach is the **only** effective way of dealing with these multiple crises.

Most participants accepted the view that without action behind the

words, there will always be cynicism; but, if survival becomes a truly common interest backed by the necessary commitment in deeds, the South will be a partner. There was agreement that the idea of environmental solidarity is important and that commitment to this objective is crucial.

Implementation and Political Will

Major obstacles must be overcome if the concept of sustainable development is to be implemented. It is arguable whether political will is sufficient to overcome them.

An initial hurdle is that of raising the level of knowledge and sophistication on the variety of actions that will be required. Simple, single-theme solutions simply do not exist, and most participants cautioned that oversimplification would jeopardize successful implementation. As mentioned earlier, the concept must be developed and defined more concretely. Only then can the various elements be implemented effectively.

Several participants cautioned that the case for sustainable development will be greatly weakened if ill-conceived "solutions" are implemented and later found to be erroneous or ineffective. For example, one participant expressed the view that, while minimizing the greenhouse effect will clearly require reductions in carbon dioxide emissions, it would be wiser to wait a few years and then implement a good and workable solution than to begin now with an approach that really is not thought through. Other participants warned that it would be hazardous to defer action too long and that the argument for delay could also be an argument for doing nothing.

One major implementation burden will fall disproportionately on the North. High standards of living have been achieved at a cost of high resource use and major environmental damage. The North will have to reduce these costs disproportionately. There was fairly strong agreement that the North will have to find ways of ending its pattern of conspicuous consumption. Most participants defined this in terms of a change in lifestyle—moving toward reduced use of energy and other resources and sharp reductions in pollutant emissions per unit of gross national product (GNP). This lifestyle change would have to involve nearly everyone. Some participants suggested that this would require a reduction in standard of living. A few rejected this notion as unworkable and unnecessary since the Japanese and others have shown that technology can achieve

reduced resource use and pollution while, at the same time, GNP is rising. Several suggested that education at an early age, local activism, consumer education, and product labeling for the environment could provide the needed impetus to change consumptive patterns in the developed countries.

Another major obstacle is that of achieving development and population stabilization in the South. For some years, debt burdens have impeded development. Development models have been the center of much debate, with no clear understanding of what will be required. Several participants speculated that the first necessary step toward implementation of sustainable development in the South would be to provide some accurate economic assessment as to the costs of implementing programs on the necessary scale. For many participants commitment to meet these costs is the true test of political will. As one participant noted, the level of national commitment is high in many developed countries, but the level of international commitment is very low, especially when it comes to economic support for developing countries. The trends toward meaningful environmental action may be encouraging, but it does not mean anyone is ready to invest the billions necessary to make sustainable development a success. One participant countered that while the cost is high the level of commitment has been the highest in some developing countries where the costs are known. Others noted that while the cost of sustainable development may be high, the cost of doing nothing may be much higher.

Still another major hurdle is that of coordinating national regulatory policy. If the greenhouse effect is to be abated, all nations must cut emissions of carbon dioxide and other gases. This requires international agreements and coordinated action. Nations must be focussed on the greater global good—another test of political will.

In sum, major restructuring of social and political mores is in order. The systemic nature of these issues calls for recognition of the linkages, and the concept of sustainable development provides a beginning if the world is prepared to make the necessary social, political, and financial commitment to establish this as a truly global effort.

Institutions

The United Nations has called for an international conference on environment and development to be held in 1992, twenty years

after the World Conference on the Protection of Man's Environment held in 1972 in Stockholm. Most participants expected that the 1992 conference will seek institutional reforms intended to strengthen the response to environmental degradation. But will the conference also pursue steps to reinvigorate economic development in the Third World inasmuch as poverty has been identified as a leading cause of environmental problems? How far-reaching will the proposed reforms be and will they be adequately funded? Is the "spaceship earth" character of many environmental issues an organizing principle that could drive a major rethinking of international institutions—both formal and informal? Should attempts to revitalize the international response to environmental problems derive from a functional and disaggregated approach or from a grand design that is achieved through political negotiations? These are the issues that ran through discussion of the international response to the environmental crisis.

Environment—An Engine for Change?

Is political concern for the environment sufficiently strong to provide a rationale for a broad rethinking of international institutions? Most participants thought not, and some questioned whether there is a need for rethinking them. Several said that environmental issues are so urgent and so pervasive that they should be considered more important than others. Furthermore, they should be used to radically reorder the way the world does business economically, politically, and socially.

However, others said that organizing international institutions around this perspective shows a developed-country bias. Institutional response to lagging economic development is the primary concern of national leaders in Africa and Latin America especially, even though they may be genuinely concerned about the environment.

Another view suggested a middle ground. Not all environmental problems threaten the survivability of the planet. But those that do should be given highest priority for national and international action. Issues including global warming, population, ozone depletion, deforestation, and desertification were identified for this highest priority.

Several participants expressed confidence that the link between environment and development will continue to be made more evident by further scientific research. As that happens, it was argued,

political leaders will be pushed in the direction of adopting a common goal—restoring the health of the planet's ecosystems. Achieving such a goal must include dealing with questions of equity. Some participants, however, remained doubtful about whether environment would be the issue that pushes the world toward revisiting the equity question.

Most participants agreed that there is insufficient political will at this time to take bold steps toward a reordered world. That is, no new "global compact" for development and environment is likely. Neither is it possible to be optimistic about adoption of a comprehensive, new international security system which features more concern for economic and environmental questions and relatively less for military concerns. Some participants, however, believe the time is quickly approaching when the United Nations must be reformed and vested with new authority to effect coordination of economic and environmental activities across many sectors.

Organizing Principles

Even without sufficient will for enactment of sweeping changes, participants saw the possibility for significant new international initiatives to deal with the environmental crisis. Several principles which should guide the development of new institutional efforts emerged in the discussions.

First, institutions should be defined broadly. Institutional failures are not limited to governments and international organizations. There is also a need to reform practices which are widely accepted but dysfunctional for environmental purposes. For example, extensive discussion was given to pricing and accounting practices which do not place value on the use of irreplaceable natural resources or cost on the emission of wastes and pollutants. Failure to internalize all values and costs in economic decision-making, it was argued, yields a distorted view of costs and is an institutional failure every bit as important as the malfunctioning of an international organization.

Second, reform of international political institutions should not be reduced to moving boxes around on the United Nations' organizational chart. As one participant said, "The aesthetics of institutional coherence is not important." The pretense that there is an integrated, coherent international system should be dropped. What is important is that the work get done. Form should follow function. Whichever standing organization or ad hoc group is able to effectively address a problem should not be impeded by bureaucratic considerations.

Third, there was debate over whether international attempts to address environmental problems should be centered in an effort to achieve a "grand bargain," such as the Law of the Sea Treaty, or whether a disaggregated effort—in which environmental and development issues are raised in the particular forums most appropriate to the issue—is better. Most participants favored "letting a thousand flowers bloom" or the second approach. The problem with the comprehensive agreement approach is that it engages diplomats in lengthy negotiations in which the art of making a deal becomes more important than the substance of the negotiations—i.e., whether the deal is in anyone's interest. Several participants noted the need for the development of a new international rationale for attacking environment and development problems. But they suggested that this has a better chance of emerging from working together on problems than from trying to negotiate a comprehensive understanding directly.

Finally, a similar debate was held on whether the international community should concentrate its efforts on drafting and negotiating statements of principle and proclamations on broad environmental rights and responsibilities or whether it should focus on correcting specific economic and political malfunctions which yield unsustainable development. Again, most favored the disaggregated approach.

Against this backdrop, participants discussed deficiencies in the international system and the most effective steps that could be taken to remedy them.

UNEP's Performance

There was praise for many of the things that UNEP has done since its creation after the 1972 Stockholm Conference but consensus that the world community's efforts through UNEP have been far short of what is needed. UNEP is a program of the United Nations which was created to inject environmental considerations into the activities of the entire UN system. It is charged with providing intellectual leadership and policy coordination on environmental matters. The Environment Fund—about $30 million per year in voluntary contributions—was set up to finance much of UNEP's work.

Since its inception, UNEP's main activities have involved monitoring the earth's environment, assessing monitored data, coordinating scientific work, managing negotiations, encouraging new pat-

terns of cooperation among UN system members, disseminating information, and raising consciousness on environmental issues. Most participants said that the monitoring and assessment done by UNEP has been good, but there is a need for much more of it; huge parts of the planet are not monitored. Several also suggested that information sharing needs to be dramatically improved. UNEP's efforts in recent months in facilitating negotiations on global warming drew strong praise.

The sharpest criticism of UNEP came in the area of policy planning. It was noted that when UNEP was started, there was an Environmental Coordinating Board which was meant to operate outside the scope of the United Nations' Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) which includes the heads of UN specialized agencies. However, the work of the board was resisted by what one participant termed, "the professional UN coordinators who work to enforce no coordination." The professional coordinators prevailed. Another participant noted that UNEP at first avoided the turf-building which plagues the UN system but has since succumbed to it, becoming "sectorial, defensive, and a total perversion of how it started."

Proposals put forward for strengthening UNEP included:

- Increase its resources.
- Upgrade it to a specialized agency. Several participants supported this but most opposed the idea.
- Elevate the status of the executive director to something like an international ombudsman on behalf of the environment.
- Merge UNEP with the UN Development Program, a move that would marry the functions of environmental protection and economic development. There was considerable resistance to this proposal from participants who believed that merging the two programs would weaken both.

UNEP can play a role in bringing about change, but environmental issues and the fact that environment and development need to be considered together means that these issues must be infused in the international agenda at many levels. Most participants, therefore, believe that an adequate international response to environmental problems requires looking well beyond UNEP.

Policy Coordination

UNEP's shortcomings in the task of policy coordination require serious attention. The problem, it was suggested, arises because

there is not enough political muscle behind UNEP. In the absence of support from powerful political leaders, the heads of specialized agencies and UN departments are able to thwart policy coordination intended to promote environmental ends if they believe those efforts intrude on their institutional prerogatives.

The lack of policy coordination has spawned several proposals, some from heads of government, to vest another intergovernmental body—particularly one which would meet at a high level—with the responsibility for that coordination. Proposals range from charging the Security Council with this task, to revising the mandate of the Trusteeship Council, to creating a new authority within the UN framework, among others.

The need for policy coordination stems from an analysis which recognizes that UN agencies are compartmentalized, reflecting similar divisions within national governments. Agriculture ministries carry their international agenda to the Food and Agriculture Organization, finance ministries do business at the International Monetary Fund, trade ministries look to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade or the UN Conference on Trade and Development, etc. Quite often, the same government will take conflicting positions on the same issue in different forums, reflecting disputes among various constituencies within that government. Specialized agency and UN department heads carry on the dispute at the international level, and there is no higher executive authority capable of resolving the differences. Furthermore, in this situation there is little possibility of a coordinated and integrated effort at solving a problem on which expertise from several sectors is needed.

A policy coordination body has been proposed to resolve this problem for environmental issues. But should its responsibility be limited to narrowly defined environmental issues? Participants who advocated the creation of some kind of body argued that since environment and development are linked, the body should have responsibility for both.

Most proposals envision a small enough body to work effectively but globally representative. It should also meet at a high level, perhaps even holding periodic summits of heads of state.

Several participants expressed skepticism about the idea. They were suspicious about the creation of any new institutions, since the new body would undoubtedly require money and its effective-

ness is uncertain. Perhaps more important, this policy coordination body would have considerable authority, and there is concern at the national level about the potential for infringement on sovereignty. There is also concern by some that it would interfere in the performance of the marketplace. Most participants were doubtful if there is sufficient political will for creation of such a body at this time.

Distorted Marketplace

A major institutional deficiency of the international system involves the failure to adequately measure and internalize all costs of production in many economic enterprises. This creates distortions throughout the marketplace and needs to be remedied if real progress is to be made on the environment.

At the national level, GNP, the standard tool for reporting the level of economic activity, does not take into account the loss of natural resources or destruction done by pollution. Consequently, a nation could be chopping down its forests and selling timber, thereby showing a healthy level of economic activity, but at the cost of selling off its wealth. That loss of wealth is not reflected in the GNP.

Participants urged that national accounts be adjusted to address this problem. One noted that "We need a 'net national product.'" It is also crucial that accounting at the microeconomic level, where enterprise decisions are made, be adjusted to include all costs related to the activity including resource use and effluent impact. Enterprises, whether peasant farmers or large transnationals, make decisions based on their perception of what is in their best interests. Full, internalized accounting would remove the tendency to trivialize or ignore resource and environmental costs. However, this theoretically desirable change is extremely difficult to implement practically. It will probably require that governments interfere in the marketplace through the use of taxes or regulation. However, businesses are traditionally wary of government interference. Further, for this approach to be effective, national government policies on taxation and regulation of emissions and resources would have to be coordinated. Failure to do this could simply drive enterprises toward operating in the countries with the lowest taxes and most lax regulatory policies.

But several participants noted that there may not always be a need for additional regulation. In many cases governments could use existing powers to remove perverse incentive structures. Again,

using the example of tropical rainforests, governments often do not understand the economic value of the forest. They see more potential for short-term economic gain in having the forests cut and using the land for crops. As a result they grant ten-year franchises to logging entrepreneurs to clear the forests which would take thirty to forty years to regenerate. These policies provide no incentive to replant and result in ultimately unsustainable use of the land and undesirable contribution to global warming. Instead, if calculations were made to show the sustainable yield of the forests, governments would have a better chance to understand their value. They would see that there is more long-term value in switching from "mining" forests to an agricultural development of them.

Although this modified assessment of value would be a positive development, several noted that calculating original value and sustainable yield of forests is not necessarily easy. For example, how can a monetary value be placed on the genetic diversity in the Amazon? And, it was argued by some, any disturbance to a natural habitat has consequences which cannot be fully anticipated. Thus, there may be environmental damage that can never be calculated and entered into the accounting.

However, most participants agreed that assigning monetary value to those things which can be priced would greatly alleviate the problem. It was noted that in the United States, 90 percent of the hazardous waste problem is caused by 50 percent of the companies doing business with hazardous materials. By going after that 50 percent, problems have not been completely eliminated, but most of the problem is being addressed. Further, this practice would allow market forces to determine the most cost-effective places and ways to correct problems within frameworks set by governments.

It was also argued that adjustments to accounting to reflect ecological costs is a less radical approach to saving rainforests than some of the debt-for-nature swaps which have taken place. Those swaps raise questions about loss of national sovereignty for many developing countries. By contrast, calculating the sustainable value of the rainforests is consonant with national sovereignty, economically rational, and ecologically sound.

The consequences of these adjustments are not all benign. Assigning greater value to the resources in the developing world, for example, drives up the costs which consumers will ultimately pay. However, it was noted that since the developed world consumes

much more per capita they would be the ones paying more. And that would help address the question of equity.

It was noted that some modest efforts to reformulate accounting practices and make national and international adjustments are underway. Much more is needed.

Looking Toward 1992

Over the next three years much effort will go into preparing for the 1992 conference on environment and development. That is important because, as several participants noted, the preparation for the conference is more important than the conference itself. The goal of the conference should be to maintain and accelerate the momentum toward increased international cooperation and action on environmental issues. Participants suggested how the conference should be organized and conducted:

- It should be a United Nations' conference and not a UNEP conference. The UN General Assembly should give it a high mandate that takes it beyond the scope of UNEP's work. One of the objectives of the conference should be to monitor the evolution of UNEP, and so it should not be organized at the UNEP level. Hence, the UNEP Governing Council should not be the preparatory committee. There should be an independent secretariat, not one drawn from the United Nations or UNEP. Finally, the specialized agencies should not be given equal weight with the conference preparatory committee and secretariat in deciding the scope of the conference and its agenda.

- Most believed the conference should be held at a level higher than environment ministers. Some participants were pessimistic about the possibility of holding it at any higher level, and a few thought that the environment minister level would be sufficient.

- One participant suggested that the General Assembly consider something more than an intergovernmental conference. Representatives of business, agriculture, and nongovernmental organizations might be included as full participants.

- The conference's secretary-general should be an acknowledged leader of considerable political stature and not someone who is characterized only as an "experienced diplomat."

- A major objective of the conference should be to help spell out

what sustainable development is. What, in concrete terms, should nations be doing? Several participants urged that this not be done through generalized debates about abstract ideas but through visual presentations and case studies.

● A few participants urged that the conference adopt a declaration on environmental rights and responsibilities. They said that this occasion should be used to state principles governing international environmental efforts. However, most opposed that approach. They said that the United Nations is no longer able to inflame passions, and holding lengthy debates among diplomats over abstract principles would be a waste of time, energy, and political capital.

● Most participants urged the adoption of an agenda similar to one used at the Stockholm Conference. The main items should be functional—monitoring, assessing, managing, and supporting measures. Among the topics to be considered under those headings should be: monitoring in places where it is very expensive or where governments have no short-term interest in doing so; sharing information through a more effective database; providing more training, especially for people in developing countries; raising additional funds for environmental work (including considering conditions that might be placed on additional funding); revising accounting practices to more accurately reflect the costs of production; searching for ways to measure irreversible thresholds of environmental degradation through which the world must not be allowed to pass; and considering the relationship between population growth and environmentally sustainable economic growth.

● A few participants believed the time may be right for considering a modest world tax on certain kinds of economic activity to pay for additional environmental efforts.

● With respect to reorganization or expansion of formal international institutions responsible for the environment, some participants believed it may be possible in 1992 to create a policy coordination body as was described earlier. Others thought it would still be too early for such a move, and the conference will be limited to more modest reorganization efforts.

● A meeting of nongovernmental organizations should be held in conjunction with the formal conference. This meeting should look toward the future and toward reforms that ultimately will be needed but which are not yet ripe for formal adoption. This, it was suggested, is the appropriate forum for considering more radical

redefinitions of security and reconceptualizations of the common good. The forum can generate political pressure that lets the conference delegates know that they cannot rest on their laurels even if the conference is concluded successfully.

Conclusion

New winds are blowing. Growing public awareness and concern about the deterioration of the environment and the depletion of natural resources is providing a politically powerful force for change. That force may one day bring about a broad commitment and major effort toward sustainable development. To succeed, that commitment and effort must be built on the image of "spaceship earth." It must preserve the habitability of the planet, promote development to eradicate poverty, and address questions of equity between North and South. It may lead to a new conception of security, one that is more global than national, one with more emphasis on economics, environment, and sustainability and less emphasis on military strength. It may also help bring about a reform of international institutions—both formal and informal—to make them more compatible with the patterns of living for the twenty-first century.

As measured by the participants at this conference, however, there is still a great deal of wariness about the strength of these winds and the direction they will take the world. There are questions about what a new concept of security might entail. There is suspicion in much of the developing world that the North's concern for the environment is directed only at cleaning up pollution and not at fostering development. There is worry, even among environmentalists in the North, that the current high level of political interest in the issue is ephemeral. There is uncertainty in all quarters about the nature of reformed institutions, what powers they would have, and how much they and their programs would cost.

It is still too early to say how far-reaching the international response to environmental problems will be. Whether it will be accompanied, as it must, by a new push for development is also in doubt. Some see the possibility for dramatic change in the next several years. Others are more cautious and think limited measures are all that is warranted or can now be achieved. Still others argue that now is the time for a "measure of audacity," and they press forward such ideas as a policy coordination board and a limited world tax.

Lingering wariness and differences over how far to go should not be allowed to be paralyzing. Conference participants clearly recognized the seriousness of environmental threats and the need to create an effective international response. The new winds are stirring political momentum for change in international environmental efforts. If that momentum can be sustained, there is good reason to hope for near-term agreement on measures to curb planet-threatening abuses of the environment. There is improved likelihood of a 1992 conference that succeeds in strengthening institutions and taking actions that will promote environmentally safe development. Human survival demands that momentum be sustained.

Chairman's Observations

The Bermuda discussions were lively and stimulating. Participants were serious about the subject, and I was encouraged by the enthusiasm and commitment with which they approached it.

Deterioration of the environment and depletion of natural resources present the global community with major challenges which are perhaps as difficult as any yet faced. These issues constitute a creeping menace. It will be all too easy for the world to temporize and defer action since the ultimate crisis of human survival is not immediate. It will be all too easy for the world to complacently pass environmental thresholds beyond which tolerable human life will become extremely difficult, if not impossible, to sustain. Nonetheless, this is not a time for panic. It is a time for measured and determined action and progress. It is a time for dedicated participation from all quarters. The ultimate survival of humanity will certainly depend on committed and statesman-like leadership from the highest levels and also upon continued grassroots momentum which changes lifestyles, demands progress, and makes inaction unacceptable.

The 1992 conference on environment and development is a significant opportunity for mobilizing attention and action. It is crucial that this conference be planned and conducted for maximum result. Participants are on target when they recommend that this be a UN conference with an independent secretariat. The secretary-general of the conference should be a person of eminence and energy. All nations should mobilize the highest possible level of support and participation in this conference. Failure to make this conference significant will mean that the world misses a major opportunity for progress.

The Brundtland Commission has made a highly significant contribution in its development of the concept of sustainable development. While the concept needs further refinement and more concrete definition, this cannot be done instantaneously but will happen with time. However, there can be no doubt that progress on environmental and resource matters requires that development be an integral part of the solution. Neither the 1992 conference nor the ultimate program of action can succeed if the world's leaders permit these issues to deteriorate into a destructive North-South skirmish. The "spaceship earth" concept must prevail. All peoples and lands ride this fragile planet together. We will survive together or not at all.

Dealing with environment, resource, and development issues will require a far greater degree of internal national government coordination between domestic and foreign policy. National governments tend to be organized sectorally to suit their domestic needs. Yet problems of population, environment, development, and economics are highly interconnected and frequently transcend national boundaries. Too often in the past, different national government ministries from the same country have spoken with disparate and uncoordinated voices at various international agencies and forums. This cannot continue. National governments must do a far better job of interdisciplinary and intersectoral coordination. This may require changes in structure of national governments and will certainly require more effective leadership and coordination.

Because of the interconnectedness of both the problem and the solution, the world must find ways of developing multiparty programs of action which involve governments, nongovernmental organizations, international institutions, and individuals. Among others, the business community is necessarily an important part of these issues and their resolution. The business community must be challenged to participate in finding solutions that yoke economic self-interest and market forces with actions that are environmentally sound, that promote development, and that conserve and reuse resources. Programs that ask individuals, business enterprises, or countries to act in ways that seem inimical to their own interests are doomed from the outset. While national governments have power to define the "rules of the game" and can establish regulations and penalties, such actions will succeed only if several conditions exist. First, the actions of each national government must be coordinated and consistent with others because the problems of environment, resources, and development transcend national boundaries. This requires effective international institutions and development of their roles and authority. Second, national policies and programs must evolve steadily and predictable because it is difficult, if not impossible, to conform to policies that are erratic and unstable. Finally, the most effective and economic solutions will be those that work creatively with powerful market forces rather than trying to overcome them. Incentives, pollution taxes, and internalizing all economic costs into microeconomic decision making are steps in this direction. These results are most likely to be achieved if the business community is involved constructively in defining problems and developing solutions.

Our conference spent relatively little time on the population issue. However, it is clear that limiting the world's population to accept-

able levels is critical. Conference participants held no real hope that the world's population could, under the best circumstances, be stabilized at less than about twice its present level. This would mean an ultimate stabilization in the middle of the twenty-first century at ten to eleven billion people. While the level of certainty is less than desired, various studies suggest that the maximum carrying capacity of our planet with anything near tolerable living conditions is perhaps fourteen to fifteen billion people. This is precious little margin for error. Recognizing that programs to contain population levels are both controversial and difficult, the population threshold of survival is one which we dare not cross. Difficult though it may be, governments and international institutions must give this problem high priority and must develop action programs that will succeed.

Finally, it seems clear that public dialogue and nongovernmental organizations are essential to build and enhance awareness and sensitivity to environmental and resource issues. The broad national and international programs that will be established will necessarily deal with the truly global issues, such as the global commons, global warming, population, deforestation, desertification, and a limited number of similar issues. But much more than broad programs are needed. Countless decisions and actions in all sectors and at all levels affect the environmental and resource outcome. Just as these small decisions now threaten to become a tyranny that gives us an unlivable world we would not choose, the same small decisions, wisely made, are an important part of survival. People, institutions, and enterprises all over the world need their sensitivities aroused so that they do, in fact, think globally and in the long term as they decide and act locally in the short term.

Environment, resource limitations, and development do, indeed, seem to be moving toward the "high politics" agenda. While the international agenda is a long one, human survival demands that these issues move toward the top and that they receive corresponding attention and commitment. Unless our generation acts conclusively to preserve the future, it will be too late. Men and women of good will must sustain this momentum. Human survival demands it.

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UN-Related Publications

UN Peacemaking and Peacekeeping, Report of the Twentieth United Nations Issues Conference. February 1989, 24pp.

International Agenda for the 1990s, Report of the Twenty-third United Nations of the Next Decade Conference. July 1988, 36pp.

Science and Technology for Development, Report of the Nineteenth United Nations Issues Conference. February 1988, 32pp.

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